

# Soldiers

Online

# More Than A Vacation

Story and Photos by Steve Harding



**L**TC Steve Stockman readily admits that Camp Darby is probably best known as a recreation destination. Located in Livorno, about 200 miles southwest of Vicenza on the Italian Riviera, the installation's beach, campground and guesthouse attract U.S. and NATO soldiers, family members and DA civilians from across Europe.

"Our facilities, location and the 300 days of sunshine we have each year definitely make us popular," said Stockman, Camp Darby's outgoing installation commander. "But most people don't realize that this is also one of the most strategically important locations in Europe."

That importance stems from the fact that Camp Darby is home to 26 Army, Air Force and Department of Defense tenant activities. The Army organizations include the Combat Equipment Battalion-Livorno, or CEB-L, which stores and maintains prepositioned equipment and vehicles, and the 839th Transportation Bn., which is assigned to the Military Traffic Management Command and runs all the seaports supporting U.S. military operations throughout the Mediterranean.

Camp Darby is also home to the

2,000-acre Ammunition Storage Facility, whose 125 bunkers house strategic ammunition reserves for U.S. Army, Europe, U.S. Air Forces, Europe, and Army Materiel Command. The post's resident Air Force activities include the 31st Munitions Squadron and the 31st Redhorse Flight. The latter unit maintains two complete sets of prepositioned engineering equipment — about 500 pieces in all — that the Air Force would use to build airfields and repair damaged runways.

## Equipment on Call

The largest of Camp Darby's tenant activities and the only American facility of its type in southern Europe, the CEB-L stores and maintains equipment for what's known as a "two-by-two brigade set" — two

armor and two mechanized-infantry battalions. Huge warehouses contain all the materiel, repair parts and support items the units would need. Rows of M1 tanks, M2 and M3 Bradleys, M88 tank-recovery vehicles, Humvees and trucks dot the installation, basking in the Italian sun.

"The same great weather that makes us a popular travel destination makes this the ideal spot to store vehicles," Stockman said. "Our storage and dispatch operations aren't hampered by the bad weather that often affects storage sites in northern Europe."

Just as important as the weather, Stockman said, is the fact that Camp Darby is the only Army site where prepositioned materiel is co-located with ammunition. The equipment, vehicles and ammunition can thus be moved simultaneously to waiting units.

And that's where the installation's



Located on the Italian Riviera, Camp Darby is home to 26 Army, Air Force and Department of Defense tenant activities.



# Spot



**Camp Darby's private beach offers sun, sea, games and refreshments to authorized U.S. and NATO guests from throughout Europe.**

great location comes in.

"We are very well located to move things quickly," said Massimo Carpina, CEB-L's acting director of supply. "This is the only location in the southern region from which you can ship ammunition by sea, for example. We have a canal we use to move the ammunition to Livorno's harbor, where it's loaded on small ocean-going vessels and taken to a port a couple of hours south of here where ammunition ships can load it.

"In addition, we're right next to the Pisa airfield, which is C-5 capable, so we move critical combat equipment or ammunition out by air," Carpina said. "We're on the main highways to Rome and to Germany, so we can move things out by convoy or commercial

vehicles. And, finally, we have railway lines that come right onto the installation, so we can load materiel and move it out by train."

CEB-L has been doing a lot of loading and shipping recently, Carpina said, sending materiel directly to the Balkans, equipping Stateside units bound for the Balkans and 'backfilling' equipment to the Germany-based units that left equipment in the Balkans for incoming units to use.

"We have seven U.S. military members and DA civilians, and 283 host-nation employees. And they all work together to accomplish one goal: to support soldiers in the field,"

Carpina said. "We are called to be ready to release equipment in peacetime within 72 hours. In wartime, and at times like the beginning of American operations in Bosnia, we have to be ready to release equipment within 24 hours. And we're talking about armor or mechanized company and battalion sets of equipment, all of them 100 percent ready to fight.

"At the same time we support soldiers, we also support humanitarian-relief efforts," Carpina added. "We store relief stocks for the State Department — including blankets, emergency rations and water-purification systems. Whether to Africa or the Balkans, we



Heike Hasenauer



**Camp Darby's warm, clear weather allows the Combat Equipment Battalion-Livorno to store Humvees and other vehicles outside year-round.**

**(Left)** The Ammunition Storage Facility's 125 bunkers house strategic reserves for U.S. Army, Europe, Army Materiel Command and the Air Force.





Heike Hasenauer

**A CEB-L worker attends to an armored vehicle. The stored vehicles and equipment are enough for two armor and two mechanized-infantry battalions.**

can send those things necessary to improve people's quality of life."

### **A Close-knit Community**

Ensuring a decent quality of life is also important for the Area Support Team-Livorno, which performs the same installation-management functions at Camp Darby that its parent unit, the 22nd Area Support Group, does at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza.

"Camp Darby's permanent population, counting the units and family members, is more than 2,000 people," Stockman said. "There are about 350 military personnel, divided equally between Army and Air Force. And there are about 580 Italian employees split between the Area Support Team staff and the CEB-L."

"We're also a training base for the Army National Guard," Stockman added. "In summer we get about 700 Guard soldiers through here, usually mechanics or engineers, though we also use military police units. We have a local training area they can use, they stay in a great cantonment area, and they can visit places like Rome, Pisa and Florence."

And what does it take to provide for Camp Darby's residents, both permanent and seasonal?

"We have a post exchange, a commissary, youth services, everything," Stockman said. "We have an elementary and a high school, and we have a teacher-to-student ratio that ensures kids get a great education. We have no on-base housing, so we pull together as a community."

"We are a small-scale representation of any Army installation," said Paul Matthews, Camp Darby's director of community activities. "We have quality-of-life programs to support families, child care, school-age services and sports. We also just completed a \$1.5 million renovation and expansion of the Darby Community Club. And we have tremendous outdoor-recreation and travel programs for families and single personnel."

### **Holiday Heaven**

There's no avoiding the fact that, for all its strategic importance, Camp Darby is also a premier vacation destination.

"We're on the Italian Riviera and we have great facilities that also happen to be relatively inexpensive," Matthews said. "It's no wonder people like to come here."

Camp Darby hosted between 25,000 and 30,000 guests in 1999, Matthews said, and that number is expected to hit about 50,000 this year. Access to the post's MWR facilities — including the PX and commissary — is open to all U.S. military members or retirees, family members and DOD civilians. Individuals assigned to NATO units and who have NATO ID cards or NATO orders enjoy the same level of access. Members of various NATO-related organizations have limited access — for example, access to some of the MWR facilities but not the PX or commissary.

"We offer all our guests a variety of great recreational opportunities," Matthews said. "In addition to our campground, guesthouse and private beach, we offer a range of sports activities — golf, sailing, mountain climbing, skiing, you name it."

"In addition," Matthews said, "Camp Darby is an excellent jump-off point for tours to Rome and Florence, and we're just a 10-minute drive from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. And of course, this region has some of the best foods and wines in Italy."

"Our bottom-line message," Matthews said, "is this: come to Camp Darby. We may not be the biggest installation, but we believe we definitely have the most to offer. Come see for yourself." □

**Lines of stored vehicles are a common sight at Camp Darby, as are the warehouses that store smaller items.**



For further information on Camp Darby's vacation and recreation programs and facilities contact:

- Susan Huseman via e-mail to [husemas@ast.livorno.army.mil](mailto:husemas@ast.livorno.army.mil), or by telephone at 0039-050-547238 (within Europe) or 011-39-050-547238 (from the United States).

- Camp Darby's website at [www.livorno.army.mil](http://www.livorno.army.mil), then click on "MWR."



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